

Testimony in Support: HB 6374, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct On College Campuses

Jeffrey Gu, Director of Legislative Affairs, Every Voice Coalition CT

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Chairman Haskell, Chairman Elliott, Ranking Member Witkos, Ranking Member Haines, Vicechairs, and distinguished members of the committee,

My name is Jeffrey Gu. I am a proud resident of Orange, Connecticut, and a college student at New York University. I am a registered Connecticut voter. Over the past year, I have been a Director of Legislative Affairs for the Every Voice Coalition in Connecticut, a student-run and student-driven organization fighting to bring an end to the epidemic of sexual violence on our college campuses. Today, I am testifying in strong favor of **HB 6374, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses.**

Despite broad, bipartisan support for this bill's inclusion in the September Special Session, with a legislative sign-on letter receiving over fifty signatures evenly spread by percentage across the four partisan caucuses, the bill did not make the final agenda. This meant that the students of Connecticut, without the guarantee of amnesty protections, were once again left exposed to the 'Red Zone,' a period of four months between August and November when the majority of sexual violence occurs on college campuses. With a record number of freshman applications to Connecticut universities such as Yale and UCONN and an expected return to campus activities in the Fall, we cannot let another cohort of students enter Higher Ed. without the provisions outlined in this legislation.

HB 6374 (1) establishes an amnesty policy for drug and alcohol use when it comes to reporting incidents of sexual violence and (2) creates a two-year frequency campus climate survey that will inform community leaders, students, and parents about trends in sexual violence. This survey will allow student-survivors a formal, safe, and anonymous method of sharing their experiences while granting the necessary information that policymakers will need to take next steps in seeking to eliminate sexual violence from our college campuses.

When university resources fail to meet the needs of student-survivors, their classmates end up becoming first responders on the scene and caretakers over the long run, comforting their friends, classmates, and roommates about an intimate, life-altering event. I've been there. I've been a 'first responder' in one of these situations when a friend didn't feel safe coming forward about their experiences to University officials. Statistically, this is the case for most survivors of sexual violence on college campuses across the country. Connecticut has been no exception. As a state, as a community, as a union of students, survivors, and public servants, we can do better. We must do better. HB 6374 is the place to start.

Thank you for your time and support. At the moment of this writing, 58 legislators from both sides of the political aisle have already co-sponsored HB 6374, reaffirming the necessity of this bill's language protecting students and charting a new path to discovering data-based solutions to this issue. I urge the committee to vote this legislation out of committee with haste. We cannot wait any longer.